

During fiscal year 1999, audit and investigative efforts resulted in approximately \$262 million in questioned costs and \$68 million in fines, restitutions, other recoveries, and penalties. Management agreed to put an additional \$114 million to better use and recover more than \$55 million. Investigative efforts resulted in 782 indictments and 560 convictions.

OIG continued work on three Presidential initiatives to improve the efficiency of three USDA programs. A nationwide cooperative effort by OIG and the Rural Housing Service identified over \$4.3 million in misused funds at Rural Rental Housing apartment complexes operated by 20 owners and management agents; 10 cases are under investigation. Schemes included double-charging apartment complexes for management-related expenses and charging apartment complexes for personal expenses of the owner or management agent. In addition, 145 apartment complexes had serious physical deterioration, 215 needed minor repairs, and 50 had conditions that posed a health and safety hazard to tenants.

Operation “Kiddie Care” is still finding a high level of fraud in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The 22 sponsoring organizations terminated from the program had been receiving \$45.4 million in program funds annually. In 1 Ohio case, 11 persons have been implicated in a conspiracy to illegally obtain more than \$1.1 million in CACFP funds. Nine of the individuals have been indicted, and seven have pled guilty and have been sentenced to as much as 2 years 9 months of incarceration and restitution of \$790,000.

Operation Talon was designed and implemented by OIG to locate and apprehend fugitives, many of them violent offenders, who are current or former food stamp recipients, and was made possible by legislative changes in welfare reform. This nationwide initiative has been expanded to include a total of 42 metropolitan areas in 23 States, and the total number of arrests through Operation Talon has climbed to about 5,600, as a result of joint OIG/State and local law enforcement operations. The fugitives arrested during Operation Talon have included dangerous felons wanted for murder, child molestation, rape, and kidnapping, and over one-third of those arrested were sought in connection with violent crimes or illegal drug activity.

## ■ Office of the Chief Information Officer

The Chief Information Officer is the Department’s senior information technology official. The Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) supports program delivery in USDA by planning, directing, and coordinating the Department’s information and technology resources.

In accordance with the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996 and similar legislation, regulations, and executive orders, OCIO provides long-range-planning guidance, reviews all major technology investments to ensure that they are economical and effective, coordinates interagency Information Resources Management projects, and promotes information exchange and technical interoperability.

OCIO also provides telecommunications and automated data processing (ADP) services to USDA agencies through its Telecommunications Services and Operations

and National Information Technology Center located in Ft. Collins, Colorado; Kansas City, Missouri; and Washington, DC. Direct ADP services are provided to the Office of the Secretary, Office of the General Counsel, Office of Communications, Office of the Chief Financial Officer, and Executive Operations.

OCIO has oversight responsibilities for the Service Center Modernization Initiative (SCMI), which is the cornerstone of the overall reorganization and modernization effort of the Department. The ultimate goal of the SCMI is to create an environment of one-stop, quality service for customers of the Farm Service Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Rural Development mission area agencies.

## ■ Office of the Chief Financial Officer

The Chief Financial Officer has responsibility for oversight of all financial management activities relating to USDA programs and operations. The Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) directs, manages, provides policy guidance, and coordinates financial management activities and operations. It ensures compliance throughout the Department with applicable accounting standards and principles, and ensures adequate controls over asset management, including cash management operations, real property, equipment, and inventories. Through partnerships, it provides financial management leadership and service to support quality program delivery in the Department.

OCFO is responsible for developing and maintaining an integrated departmental accounting and financial management system which provides complete, reliable, consistent, and timely financial information that is responsive to the needs of program managers. OCFO is also responsible for ensuring auditable financial statements.

OCFO operates the largest automated administrative servicing operation in the Federal Government—the National Finance Center (NFC) in New Orleans, LA. The NFC processes salary and benefit payments for nearly 450,000 Federal employees, performs administrative services for more than 100 Federal departments and agencies, and acts as recordkeeper for the Federal Government's Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). The TSP currently services an \$88 billion account for 2.5 million Federal employees and retiree members.

## ■ Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations

### Office of Congressional Relations

USDA's Office of Congressional Relations serves as the Department's primary liaison with Members of Congress and their staffs, providing information on the Department's legislative agenda, budget proposals, programs, and policies.